

Kaporos: Multiculturalism, Ethics, and Anymals

Lisa Kemmerer

1 Introduction

Multiculturalism, by definition, defends cultural traditions. But what ought a multiculturalist to do when an ongoing cultural tradition conflicts with a community's core ethics? The Jewish atonement ritual, Kaporos, provides an apt example. Kaporos causes wanton suffering and bloodshed, conflicting with both Jewish religious ethics and with secular ethics more broadly, highlighting possible tensions between multiculturalism, ethics, and religious rituals.

"Anyymal" (a contraction of "any" and "animal," pronounced like "any" and "ma'l"), refers to all individuals who are of a species other than that of the speaker/author. This means that if a human being uses the term, all species except *Homo sapiens* are indicated. If a chimpanzee signs "anyymal," all species (including human beings) will be included except chimpanzees. Using the term "anyymal" avoids the use of (a) "animal" as if human beings were not animals (b) dualistic and alienating references such as "non" and "other."

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2 Kaporos

Kaporos is neither a battery hen facility nor a broiler hen operation, but it is just as bloody. Kaporos, a Jewish ritual of atonement, is a preparation for Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). Participants seize an adolescent bird by his or her wings. Then the chicken is swung around three times over the head of the person seeking atonement "[w]hile reciting the appropriate text".¹ The hen's throat is then slit; her body tossed away; and the cost of the hen (or sometimes her body) is donated to the poor.² Some 60,000 chickens are sold for roughly \$16–\$20 every year for this ritual.³ In crowded cities like New York and Los Angeles, when Kaporos is in full swing (so to speak), passersby and residents witness the arrival of a great flock of chickens crammed into bright yellow plastic crates or wire cages. Some are dead, some appear to be very sick, all look extremely distressed.⁴ Cherylyn Brown of Santa Monica, California, described what she witnessed:

The chickens had "chirping baby voices. Their feathers had urine and feces covering them so they were a dark yellow-brown. Filth had crystallized on their feathers into hard stones along their undersides. When I found them," she wrote, "they were wet from lying in the plastic cover on the concrete floor that was covered with urine, feces, and blood. Of the five holding pens, only two had containers of drinking water—and those were brown, full of excretions."⁵

¹"The Kaporot Ceremony" http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/989585/Jewish/Kaporot.htm (Accessed 29/08/2015).

²Ibid.

³Karen Davis, "United Poultry Concerns' Campaign to End Chicken Kaporos." *Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos*. March 19, 2013. n.p. <http://www.endchickensaskaporos.com/museum.html> n.p. (Accessed 29/08/2015). Also see "Crown Heights Kaporos." <http://www.kaporos.com/> (Accessed 29/08/2015).

⁴Scores of YouTube clips expose the suffering that is common and the bloodshed that is inherent in Kaporos. "Chickens as Kaporos" and "Bloodshed in Brooklyn—Kaporos" are a good place to start, though pretty much all of the clips of Kaporos are difficult to watch—it is a ritual of slaughter.

⁵Davis (2013).

After visiting a Kaporos site, David Rosenfeld, a member of one of the religious Jewish communities in Brooklyn, wrote:

I believe they receive no food or water for the week or so that they are in the possession of the retailers. They certainly receive no food or water over the Shabbat. One Kapparat station had the birds outside exposed to the rain on a Shabbat [Saturday] through Sunday. I saw birds dead in their crates. Birds were crushed. Birds were opening and closing their mouths, probably out of thirst. The retailer who sold me my birds [to live in a sanctuary] tossed them into my box as if they were loaves of bread.⁶

Chickens exploited for Kaporos have only one end—they are slated to have their throats slit (sometimes, as it happens, only partially). Those not slaughtered are left to die in their cages, abandoned without food or water.⁷

Among certain Orthodox communities, especially Hasidic communities, Kaporos is practiced every year just before Yom Kippur.⁸ Those wishing to participate usually journey to posted sites, where the chickens are stacked crate on crate. They buy an adolescent chicken and swing the bird over their head three times while reciting the appropriate verse. The young bird peeps loudly while the human's hope for atonement is expressed in these words: "This is my exchange, my substitute, my atonement; this rooster (or hen) shall go to its death, but I shall go to a good, long life, and to peace".⁹ After this, the chicken is "slaughtered in accordance with halachic procedure and its monetary worth given to the poor, or, as is more popular today, the chicken itself

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

See also Richard H. Schwartz, "The Custom of Kapparat in the Jewish Tradition." *Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos* <http://www.endchickensaskaporos.com/custom.html> (Accessed 29/08/2015).

⁹Richard H. Schwartz, "The Custom of Kapparat in the Jewish Tradition." *Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos* <http://www.endchickensaskaporos.com/custom.html> (Accessed 29/08/2015). Also see "The Kaporot Ceremony" http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/989585/Jewish/Kaporot.htm (Accessed 29/08/2015) and "Text of Kapparat." http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/320228/Jewish/Text-of-Kapparat.html (Accessed 29/08/2015).

is donated to a charitable cause".¹⁰ As can be seen in many YouTube videos posted online, after the throat is ostensibly slit (the throat is always slit cleanly), the birds are thrown into trash bins or bags. YouTube clips also show the flaws of Halachic slaughter procedures to suffer and die for a person's misdeeds.¹⁶

Seizing a hen and cutting her throat is archaic, barbaric, and of Kaporos is a religious tradition practiced by Jewish minority, which is ineffective. Contemporary slaughter facilities generally include sowings profits to a few (such as those who sell the chickens), a feeling of the hope of rendering the anymal¹¹ unconscious. Knowing this, it is surprising that Rabbi Dr. Yanklowitz, author of six books on Jewish ethics, writes that he "cannot pretend anymore that kosher meat, poultry and dairy is any [more] ethical than nonkosher food".¹²

In light of the gruesome nature of this ritual, it is surprising despite the fact that many People of the Book, including Jews I know in Kaporos is practiced even though it is not mentioned in the Torah by area, have never heard of Kaporos, Jews are collectively criticized for the Talmud¹³—even though it is not a required practice.¹⁴ This ongoing maintaining Kaporos. For many non-Jewish residents looking on, this ritual, mass bloodletting is even more surprising given that there is a shows brazen disregard for the sufferings and lives of hens, which can alternative method of atonement. Rabbi David Rosen, International does spawn hatred against the larger Jewish community. As it turns

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notes, "Those who wish to fulfill this custom can do so fully by using compassion, the injunction not to harm, the divinely ordained diet, money".¹⁵ Kaporos can be practiced, for example, by placing money humility, our duty of rulership, the divine covenant, and the strong and handkerchief and swinging the money over one's head three times. Lasting vision of the Peaceable Kingdom.

¹⁰See "The Kaporos Ceremony," http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_c_d_aid/989585/jewish/Kaporos.htm (Accessed 29/08/2015).

¹¹"Anyamal" (a contraction of "any" and "animal," pronounced just as the words "any" and "animal" are pronounced), refers to all animals, unique and diverse, marvelous and complex, colorful action.¹⁸ The Tanakh teaches, "As God is compassionate, ... so you should be compassionate." ¹⁹ Well-respected Jewish authors admonish readers that if a signing thing signs "anyamal," we will be included in this term, and she will not. In others to be merciful and kind to all that God has created.²⁰ "Throughout case, the speaker/author is a human being, so in this chapter "anyamal" refers to any animal with therefore neither dualistic nor speciesist.

¹²Shmuly Yanklowitz, "Why this Rabbi is Swearing off Kosher Meat," *Wall Street Journal*, A1 http://upc-online.org/kaporos/a_wing_and_a_prayer.html (Accessed 29/08/2015).

¹³The Torah is the first five books of the Tanakh: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Talmud consists of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history.

¹⁴Richard H. Schwartz, "The Custom of Kaporos in the Jewish Tradition," *Alliance to Enrich Jewish Tradition: Attitudes and Relationships*. (NY: KTAV Publishing, 1984), 246.

¹⁵Davis (2013).

3.1 Mercy and Compassion

Compassion for anymals is an ethical requirement in the Jewish tradition. The Tanakh teaches, "As God is compassionate, ... so you should be compassionate".¹⁹ Well-respected Jewish authors admonish readers that if a signing thing signs "anyamal," we will be included in this term, and she will not. In others to be merciful and kind to all that God has created.²⁰ "Throughout case, the speaker/author is a human being, so in this chapter "anyamal" refers to any animal with therefore neither dualistic nor speciesist.

¹⁶A Wing and a Prayer: The Kaporos Chicken-Swinging Ritual," *United Poultry Concerns*, May 30, 2014b.

¹⁷For more on this topic, please see Kemmerer's *Animals and World Religions* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁸Roberta Kalechofsky, "Hierarchy, Kinship, and Responsibility," in Paul Waldau and Kimberley U. Press, (eds.) *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (Patron. NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 91–99.

¹⁹Richard H. Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism* (NY: Lantern, 2001), 16.

²⁰Elijah Judah Schochet, *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition: Attitudes and Relationships*. (NY: KTAV Publishing, 1984), 246.

its long history, Judaism has emphasized that the animal kingdom is to be respected and dealt with kindly; Judaism carries "a profound moral commitment to respect" anymals.²¹

It is not enough to say that kindness to animals is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.²² The fact that the welfare of animals is mentioned in the Ten Commandments and that compassion toward animals is the topic of a number of passages in a number of books of the Bible, justifies the statement that compassion toward animals is an important theme of the Hebrew Bible.²³

Jewish scriptures teach that anymals are "to be respected, loved, and helped to attain their purpose according to God's will".²⁴ In the words of Rabbi Sherita Gaon of the tenth century, anymals were created so that "good should be done to them".²⁵

Rabbinical traditions teach that mercy toward anymals is central to the moral life, and that cruelty and kindness toward anymals are linked with divine punishment and reward.²⁶ Proverb 12:10 links compassion toward anymals with righteousness and cruelty with wickedness: "The righteous man knows the needs of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruel."

In Jewish tradition, anymal care supersedes other religious requirements. Rabbi David of Lelov is credited with missing the sounding of the *shofar* for Rosh Hashanah because he paused to feed a horse whose

²¹Cohn-Sherbok, "Hope for the Animal Kingdom," in Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (eds.) *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (NY: Columbia U. Press, 2006), 90.

²²Offset passages from the *Tanakh* have been translated from the Hebrew by Samantha Joo. In-text translations are from the *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

There is no difference in the fundamental meaning of any of these passages when compared with the same passages in the Christian Old Testament. Therefore, explorations of the *Tanakh* in this chapter are applicable to both Christian and Islamic traditions, but will not be repeated in subsequent chapters.

²³Louis A. Berman, *Vegetarianism and the Jewish Tradition* (NY: KTAV Publishing House, 1982), 3.

²⁴Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, "Letter 4," *Nineteen Letters* (NY: Feldheim, 1969) (Elias edition).

²⁵Kalechofsky (2001), 95.

²⁶Cohn-Sherbok (2006), 83. See also Schochet (1984), 144.

thoughtless and irresponsible careraker had rushed off to the synagogue without doing so himself.²⁷ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch eloquently summarizes Jewish ethics with regard to anymals: "Here you are faced with God's teaching, which obliges you not only to refrain from inflicting unnecessary pain on any animal, but to help and, when you can, to lessen the pain whenever you see an animal suffering, even through no fault of yours".²⁸ To do otherwise fails to fulfill the requirement for "merciful treatment of all living beings [which] has from time immemorial been a core value of Jewish views of the proper relationship between humans" and anymals.²⁹

In the Jewish tradition, human well-being "rests on God's grace," and our lives are worthy of God in relation to our ability to live the moral life, "particularly with respect to animals," for they are at our mercy.³⁰ Author and Torah commentator Rabbi Hirsch, a highly regarded neo-Orthodox Torah commentator, writes that compassion should cause our heartstrings to "vibrate sympathetically with any cry of distress sounding anywhere in creation, and with any glad sound uttered by a joyful creature".³¹ "How can we pray to God for mercy if we ourselves have no mercy? How can we speak of right and justice if we take an innocent creature and shed its blood? Every kind of killing seems to me savage and I find no justification for it".³² A ritual designed to transfer sins to chickens to save and protect one's own soul, then cut the chicken's throats, is, by definition, cruel: "disposed to inflict pain or suffering" or an act "causing or conducive to injury, grief, or pain".³³ Kaporos is cruel (and extremely self-indulgent).

²⁷Schochet (1984), 250. See also Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, *Horeb*, v. 2 (72: 482). Grunfeld Dayan (trans.) (Ondondt: Soncino, 1962), Chapter 60 and Schwartz (2001), 416.

²⁸See also Hirsch (1962), Chapter 60 and Schwartz (2001), 416.

²⁹Cohn-Sherbok (2006), 89.

³⁰Kalechofsky (2001), 95.

³¹Hirsch (1969). See also Schwartz (2001), 17.

³²Schochet (1984), 297.

³³"Cruel" <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cruel> (Accessed 26/01/2013.).

3.2 Tsa'ar Ba'alei Chayim (Not to Harm)

Tsa'ar ba'alei chayim is a biblical mandate not to cause "pain to any living creature".³⁴ The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Code of Jewish Law*) notes: "It is forbidden, according to the law of the Torah, to inflict pain upon any living creature. On the contrary, it is our duty to relieve the pain of any creature".³⁵ Jews understand that "God condemns and harshly punishes cruelty to animals,"³⁶ including pleasures motivated by bloodlust, such as "bullfights, dogfights, and cockfights,"³⁷ and frivolous pastimes in which animals are forced into unnatural situations for the sake of human fascination or amusement, such as circuses and aquarium shows.³⁸ Jewish religious traditions teach people to show compassion for animals, to be aware of the needs of animals and to protect them from harm. Scripture records "six things the LORD hates" and third among them is "Hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:16–17). Kaporos is not a religious requirement—how could it be given the cruel nature of this ritual—and this ritual is therefore frivolous; Kaporos brings great suffering to chickens and ultimately destroys their lives.

3.3 Diet

There is much to be learned about God, humanity, and animals in the first two chapters of Genesis. Only these two chapters reveal exactly what the Creator *preferred* and *intended*. The fall in Genesis 3 is the end of God's perfect creation. Consequently, these two chapters alone reveal what God intended for creation.

Genesis 2 records that people are permitted to eat of every tree but one—a vegan diet (Gen. 2:15–16). Similarly, Genesis 1 ordains a vegan diet:

³⁴See Schwartz (2001), 15.

³⁵Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, *Code of Jewish Law*, "Book 4, chap. 191." (NY: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1961), 84. See also Schwartz (2001), 19, and Cohn-Sherbok (2006), 83.

³⁶Lewis G. Regenstein, *Replenish the Earth*. (NY: Crossroad, 1991), 21.

³⁷Cohn-Sherbok (2006), 88.

³⁸Schocher (1984), 159.

God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth, all the birds of the air, and all the creatures that creep on earth—everything that has the breath of life—I give all the green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Gen. 1:29–31)

The Jewish God offered humans an overlordship that "does not include the right to kill animals for food".³⁹ According to the Tanakh, preying on one another is contrary to the deity's preference for how we ought to live; the vegan world is "as God wanted it, in complete harmony, with nothing superfluous or lacking".⁴⁰ This divinely ordained diet reminds people that we are to be compassionate and merciful, and that the Creator does not permit of bloody exploitation.

Genesis 1 reveals the divine preference for a world without bloodshed, without fear and suffering, and without predators and prey. Creation is complete *only after* the deity explains what we are to eat—that humans are to be vegan; *only then* does God note that creation is "very good." Torah establishes peaceful relations between humans and other animals, and this peaceful world brings "pleasure and the delight of the divine viewer".⁴¹ A vegan diet represents "the high ideal of God . . . an ultimate goal toward which all people should strive".⁴²

Indeed, many devout Jews have abstained from flesh.⁴³ Isaac Arama, a fifteenth-century Spanish rabbi and scholar, extols the highest ideal as abstinence from flesh, elevating ourselves "above crass bodily appetites" and living "in keeping with god's initial blueprint for mankind".⁴⁴ Isaac Luria of Egypt, a well-known sixteenth-century Jewish mystic, also

³⁹Clifton J. Allen, *Broadman Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 1:132.

⁴⁰Schwartz (2001), 2.

⁴¹Allen (1971), 1:132.

⁴²Schwartz (2001), 13.

⁴³Today, drinking milk and eating eggs also cause tremendous suffering and premature death. Those committed to living a life of peace and compassion chose to be vegan.

⁴⁴Schocher (1984), 289–290.

speak against the killing and eating of flesh.⁴⁵ Joseph Albo of Spain, a fifteenth-century rabbi and philosopher, concludes that those who understand their spiritual essence will not dominate or destroy other life forms, or consume flesh. He considers all of these to be "dangerous" habits.⁴⁶ Rav Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of pre-state Israel, a Torah scholar, and a "highly respected and beloved Jewish spiritual leader," noted that flesh eating is a temporary concession in scripture, and that a merciful God cannot prefer flesh eating, especially among those who can thrive quite well without any animal products.⁴⁷ Rabbi Cohen (Ashkenazi chief rabbi) views abstinence from flesh, "as a special path of worship" looking to that "Great Day," when all "bloodshed will cease"—"the coming of the Messiah," when "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4).⁴⁸ David Cohen (the *nazir of Jerusalem*), Shear Yashuv Cohen (Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Haifa), David Rosen (former chief rabbi of Ireland), Shlomo Goren (former Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel), and such Jewish literary giants as Shmuel Yosef Agnon and Isaac Bashevis Singer all abstained from flesh.⁴⁹ Singer writes:

The longer I am a vegetarian, the more I feel how wrong it is to kill animals and eat them. I think that eating meat or fish is a denial of all ideals, even of all religions....

... As long as people will shed the blood of innocent creatures there can be no peace, no liberty, no harmony between people. Slaughter and justice cannot dwell together.⁵⁰

Rabbis have long considered hunting to be a cruel pastime. The only thing more deplorable than hunting for pleasure is hunting for both

⁴⁵Ibid. 288.

⁴⁶Ibid. 292.

⁴⁷Schwartz (2001), 3, 175. See also Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, "Rabbinic Endorsement" *Judaism and Vegetarianism*. Schwartz, Richard H. (NY: Lantern, 2001).

⁴⁸Cohen (2001).

⁴⁹Schochet (1984), 296–297.

⁵⁰Ibid. 297.

pleasure and profit. "In the Torah the sport of hunting is impured only to fierce characters like Nimrod ... (Gen. 10:9) and Esau, who lived by his sword (Gen. 27:40), never to any of the patriarchs and their descendants".⁵¹ In the Jewish tradition, creatures of the earth are God's, they are good, and we owe them kindness. Jewish ethics forbid us from causing unnecessary suffering, including that caused by consuming animals. Killing chickens, whether for oneself or for the poor, is contrary to the divinely ordained diet.

3.4 Rulership in the Image of God

Genesis provides two stories of creation. Genesis 1 culminates in the creation of humanity, while Genesis 2 unfolds in the following order: basic earthly elements, man, vegetation, more complex inanimate matter, animals, and finally woman. The existence of two stories, with two completely different orders of creation, prevents any hierarchical interpretation of creation—nothing that is created can be considered superior or inferior based on the order of creation.

In Genesis 1, the deity creates people in the image of God and gives humans rulership.

God said, "Let us make humankind in our image according to our likeness so that they may rule over the fish of the sea, birds of the air, the cattle, all the earth, and all the creeping things that creep over the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:24–27)

In ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, the king was viewed as "the representative of the deity, with a divine mandate to rule".⁵² Genesis instructs humans to rule, or have dominion (*nadha*), as God would have us rule, not for our own benefit. We are charged with ruling in God's

⁵¹Schwartz (2001), 25.

⁵²Theodore Hiebert, "The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions." *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds.). (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 138.

stead, we have "special responsibilities".⁵³ In this light, humans are given "a unique function ... as God's representative in creation".⁵⁴ Indeed, rabbis interpret dominion as "responsible stewardship." To "image God is to image God's love and law ... to be endowed with dignified responsibility to reflect God's goodness, righteousness, and holiness ... to reflect the wisdom, love, and justice of God".⁵⁵ Our responsibilities as rulers ought to mirror God's rulership, as described in scriptures:

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is on all his works. (Ps. 145:8-9)

Because we are created in the image of God, Jewish sages teach that "people have the power to emulate the Divine compassion to all creatures"⁵⁶; if we are to rule in the image of God, "we must love the world and take care of it".⁵⁷ If people have a unique place in creation, it "is to be understood primarily in terms of special responsibility".⁵⁸

Scriptures provide a rich understanding of the deity's relationship with anymals as intimate, caring, compassionate, sustaining, and personal. "Throughout Psalms and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, God is portrayed as ... providing for the needs of animals, which in turn express their gratitude to the Lord".⁵⁹ Psalms note that "creatures beyond number look to [God] to give them their food at the proper

time" (Ps. 104: 25-30). All living beings turn to God in times of need, crying out with hunger or in fear (Joel 1:20):

The eyes of all look to you expectantly, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every creature. (Ps. 145:15-16)

Sacred writings do not indicate that anymals are of lesser importance to the Creator.⁶⁰ The divine "sustains [all], from the horns of the wild oryx to the eggs of lice".⁶¹ Anymals have a personal relationship with God; every living being matters to the Creator. Rabbi Tanhum b Hiyva commented, "The falling of rain is greater than the giving of the Law, for the giving of the Law was a joy only to Israel, while the falling of rain is a rejoicing for all the world, including the cattle and the wild beasts and the birds".⁶²

Genesis 2 delineates our divinely ordained duties more clearly: God "took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to till it and tend it" (Gen. 2:15-16). Here we find the most explicit account of what human beings—or at least men—are to *do* in their rulership. Unfortunately, the human role is unnecessarily complicated by poor English translations. The Hebrew word most frequently translated as *tend* (*shamar*) is usually translated as "protect" (as in Numbers 6:24—"The Lord bless you and protect you").⁶³ To *tend* requires vitality and nurturance for "life-sustaining and life-fulfilling relationships. ... [It] evokes a loving, caring, sustaining" role.⁶⁴

The Hebrew word most often translated as *till* (*abad*) is translated as *serve* in other portions of the Bible (such as Joshua 24:15—"Choose this day which ones you are going to serve—the Gods that your forefathers

⁵³Kalechofsky (2001), 98. See also John B. Cobb Jr. "Christianity, Economics, and Ecology", *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds.), 506-507.

⁵⁴Hiebert (2010), 138.

⁵⁵Calvin DeWitt, "Benemoth and Barrachians in the Eye of God." *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 354.

⁵⁶Schwartz (2001), 16.

⁵⁷DeWitt (2000), 306.

⁵⁸Kinsley, David. *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1995.

⁵⁹Regenstein, 33.

⁶⁰Paul Waldau, *The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 18-19.

⁶¹Schocher (1984), 57.

⁶²Schocher (1984), 146.

⁶³DeWitt Calvin, "Three," 353.

⁶⁴Ibid.

served ... or those of the Amorites").⁶⁵ According to Genesis 2:15, humans are placed in the Garden of Eden to *protect* and *serve*. Rabbi Hirsch affirms that humans were created to "serve (work) and safeguard the Earth".⁶⁶ Genesis 2 reveals man as "servant, not the master" of creation.⁶⁷ Do we serve chickens if we try to unload our sins onto them and then cut their throats? Rabbi Hirsch writes:

As God is merciful, so you also be merciful. As He loves and cares for all His creatures because they are His creatures and His children and are related to Him, because He is their Father, so you also love all His creatures as your brethren. Let their joys be your joys, and their sorrows yours. Love them and with every power which God gives you, work for their welfare and benefit, because they are the children of your God, because they are your brothers and sisters.⁶⁸

3.5 Humility

The Tanakh anticipates the common human tendency to see animals as lesser and to view ourselves as Godlike. Ecclesiastes (Tanakh) notes that humans (distinct from "divine beings") must "face the fact that they are beasts" (Eccles. 3:18). Though created in the image of God, we are "not distinguished from other forms of life but [are] identified with them".⁶⁹ We are animals.

Rabbinic stories recall the many ways that animals (including humans) serve God, fulfilling both ritual and moral obligations.⁷⁰ Psalms encourage all of creation to praise God, including "wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and winged birds" (Ps. 148:3–13); "Let all that breathes praise the LORD" (150:6). Rabbi Aha notes that God oversees the planet "with the help of all," including serpents, frogs,

scorpions, and mosquitoes, and that God even calls on anymals to dispense divine justice.⁷¹ For example, a deer brings about Zedekiah's capture (Ginzberg). Discerning lions do not harm Daniel, yet they devour his enemies (Dan. 6:10–28). Snakes and scorpions do not harm the Israelites in the desert (Deut. 8:15). A dove warns Abishai that David is in danger.⁷² A serpent kills a deceitful priest beneath the altar of Baal. Ants (or worms) swarm the stored *minna* to expose those who are guilty of hoarding (Exod. 16:20), while mice swarm those who captured the ark (1 Sam. 6:5). Ants rescue the Israelites from the king of Bashan.⁷³ Hornets help the Israelites defeat the Amorites (Josh. 24:12). Frogs plague the Egyptians—even casting themselves into ovens—yet they survive, and return to the river, protected by the divine while engaged in the work of God. In Exodus 8, gnats and flies create the third and fourth plagues.⁷⁴ In the *Targum Yonatan*, David questions God's wisdom in creating such "useless" creatures as spiders and wasps. David's life is soon saved by an obliging spider, who builds her web across a cave where he hides from his pursuers. Seeing the web and assuming no one has passed through the entrance, the soldiers pass by and the arrogant human is spared.⁷⁵

Anymals demonstrate both willingness and ability to serve God. When we destroy a chicken, we put an end to her prayers and service to her Creator. This is certainly one good reason why scriptures are very clear that all life is to be protected.

3.6 Covenant

Divine sensitivity and commitment to anymals, and a lack of human supremacy or superiority are also evidenced in the divine covenant

⁶⁵ DeWitt (2000), 204.

⁶⁶ Hirsch (1969). See also Schwartz (2001), 16.

⁶⁷ Hiebert (2010), 140.

⁶⁸ Hirsch (1962), which is quoted in Schwartz (2001), 24–25.

⁶⁹ Hiebert (2010), 129.

⁷⁰ Schochet (1984), 135.

⁷¹ Ibid. 129, 133.

⁷² "Og, King of Bashan." <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=215&letter=G> (Accessed 29/08/2015).

⁷³ Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, "Og Stands Tall on the Stage of History", *National Jewish Outreach Program, Deurim* 5769–2009, <http://www.njop.org/html/Devartim%205769-2009.html> (Accessed 05/02/2010).

⁷⁴ Schochet (1984), 129, 130, 138, 139.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 133.

(Genesis 9). Scripture is no less than redundant in explicitly stating that God's covenant is with "every living thing on earth"—and with the earth itself.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "I now establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you—the birds, the cattle, and all the creature of the earth with you, all that comes out from the ark—every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and between all the living creatures which are with you for all future generations. I have set my bow in the clouds and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and between all the living creature of all flesh and the waters will never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all the living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I establish between me and all the flesh upon the earth." (Gen. 9:8–17)

Humans are included with "all flesh" in the Genesis 9 covenant, which admits of no separation between humans and anymals. God's rainbow covenant is between God and chickens and humanity and sardines and the dark brown soil.

3.7 The Peaceable Kingdom

The "Torah was given for the sake of peace".⁷⁶ Jewish visions of the created universe begin and end with a peaceful world, a world where people and anymals live together harmoniously, without exploitation and bloodshed. Scriptures remind that wisdom is precious and "all her paths, peaceful" (Prov. 3:17). Scriptures teach that we have come from a

world of perfect peace and are headed into yet another perfect peace.⁷⁷ Violence is not chronic; there will be "reconciliation, concord, and trust".⁷⁸

A vision of a Peaceful Kingdom is offered in Isaiah, Hosea, and Job. Hosea prophesies a future covenant "with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground," a time when God "will also banish bow, sword, and war from the land. Thus [God] will let them lie down in safety" (Hosea 2:20). The Book of Job also anticipates a time when people will neither kill nor fear beasts, but "the beasts of the field will be your allies" (Job 5:23). The prophet Isaiah promises "perfect peace among people as well as between human beings and the animal kingdom".⁷⁹

In this "state of peace and well-being," flesh is not consumed by any animal, a world "symbolized by the idyllic picture of powerful animals and poisonous reptiles in harmonious companionship with domesticated animals and truly spiritual human children".⁸⁰

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fawning together,
and a little child will herd them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.
The nursing child shall play
over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand
into the viper's nest.
They will not hurt or destroy

⁷⁷ Berman (1982), 8.

⁷⁸ Guthrie, D., and J. A. Moyet (eds.), *The New Bible Commentary: Rev. Ed.* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1970).

⁷⁹ Cohen (2001).

⁸⁰ George Arthur Buttrick (ed. and trans.), *The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols.* (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 5:249.

on all my holy mountain
for all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of YHWH [God]
as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:6–9)

We are headed back to the perfect peace that was originally created, a perfect peace in which humans do not exploit other animals for their nursing milk, their eggs, or their flesh. A world where humans nurture chickens and do not attempt to dump sins on their souls and then force them beyond the threshold of life.

4 Jewish Ethics and Daily Life

Jewish Scriptures are *centrally* concerned with “life on earth.”⁸¹ Jewish law, customs, and traditions stem from the Hebrew root “to go” or “walk,” and a more-to-the-point translation might be “path” or “way of walking.” Scriptures are to guide day-to-day life. This means that how we live our daily lives is of critical importance.

Scriptures are abundantly clear that we are to be humane—that mercy and compassion are central to the moral life; cruelty is explicitly condemned. Scriptures are filled with guidance as to how we ought to live, some of which are written with remarkable clarity and noteworthy eloquence:

... what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God!
(Mic. 6:8)

Justice does not admit of exploitation; goodness does not permit cruelty; and walking humbly with God does not allow us to elevate ourselves above other species, or to cruelly exploit other living beings with an eye to our own hoped-for gains. It certainly does not permit us to

attempt to foist off sins on others and then slit their throat, as if to be sure the sins did not find their way back to our own blackened souls.

And we are to struggle for change: Humans are not merely to hope for the Peaceable Kingdom, but to actively *work* to herald in the return of God's Peaceable Kingdom. Psalm 34:15 commands, “Seek amity, and pursue it.” As a consequence, we have many comments on cruelty from Jewish leaders. Orthodox Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (twentieth century) condemned the production and consumption of veal: “It is definitely forbidden to raise calves in such a manner because of the pain that is inflicted.”⁸² Contemporary rabbis have also opposed the fur industry, which entails cruelty, such as “bone-crushing leghold traps,” clubbing baby seals, and “hanging rabbits and raccoons by their tongues” (so as not to scar pelts)—all for a completely unnecessary product in light of contemporary, synthetic clothing options that are warmer and lighter, and simply more practical on many levels.⁸³ Rabbi David Ha-Levy (Israel, twentieth century) agreed and decreed that both manufacturing and wearing fur are a violation of the Jewish prohibition against harming other creatures.⁸⁴

Jews have also been prominent in founding and working with organizations to protect anymals. Lewis Gompertz (1779–1865) tried not to “do anything that would cause suffering to animals.”⁸⁵ He labored to end dogfighting, bullfighting, and bull baiting and “renounced flesh, eggs, milk, leather and silk, condemned vivisection and would not ride in a horse-drawn coach.”⁸⁶ Gompertz was a founding member and secretary of the Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (contemporary RSPCA) and founder of Animals' Friend Society in England. He “devoted his life to the cause of kindness to animals” and simultaneously devoted his life to God.⁸⁷

⁸² Kalechofsky (2001), 96.

⁸³ Cohn-Sherbok (2006), 88.

⁸⁴ Kalechofsky (2001), 97.

⁸⁵ “The History of the RSPCA,” Animal Legal and Historical Center: Michigan State University. Accessed Aug. 29, 2015.

⁸⁶ “The History of the RSPCA,” Animal Legal and Historical Center: Michigan State University. Accessed Aug. 29, 2015.

⁸⁷ “Gompertz, Lewis,” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?letter=G&arid=355> (Accessed 27/11/2008).

⁸¹ Berman (1982), 43.

Contemporary anymal activist Richard Schwartz, author of *Judaism and Vegetarianism* and the associate producer of *A Sacred Duty: Applying Jewish Values to Help Heal the World*, active for many years with the Jewish Vegetarians of North America,⁸⁸ Schwartz advocates a change of diet as a matter of *Kiddush hashem*—honoring God (JVNA). He is a member of Young Israel of Staten Island (Orthodox synagogue), where he speaks out strongly against Kaporos.

5 Sacrifice

A few isolated Jewish scriptures affirm the ancient practice of animal sacrifice. When Noah lands the ark and thinks to please God with sacrifice, scripture tells us that God is pleased with the odor of burning flesh. Why would God be pleased with the killing and burning of a sheep or goat? How are we to understand such passages in light of previously discussed Jewish ethics?

In the early chapters of Genesis, humanity makes a considerable mess of creation, showing willful disobedience, introducing murder, and becoming violent and neglectful of the Creator. In such a situation, one might expect God's expectations for human beings to be considerably diminished. Indeed, after attempting to flood humanity off the planet, God appears to come to terms with who humans are and consequently accepts a measure of earthly violence, even permitting humans to eat flesh—though it is clear in tone that such violence comes with a price:

The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another; I will require a reckoning for human life. (Gen. 9:2–5)

⁸⁸ JVNA (Jewish Vegetarians of North America). <http://www.jewishveg.com/> (Accessed 29/11/2008).

The tone of the message stands in stark contrast with the tone of Genesis 1 and 2, in which the divine Creator is clearly pleased. Violence and bloodshed do not please the One who created life. Obedience and devotion to God do, and so it is reasonable to assume that the Creator is pleased that Noah gives thanks, while it does not make sense to assume that it is the smell of a dead body itself which pleases God. The teachings of Genesis 1 and 2 and the tone of Genesis 9 support this conclusion; it makes perfect sense that God would be pleased with Noah's *effort*, with Noah's spiritual inclination, with his attention to God and attempt to thank the Creator. There is strong evidence in scripture that God would have preferred almost anything to blood sacrifice as a method of giving thanks, just as it is clear that the divine felt the need to make bloody concessions for a fallen humanity.

Additionally, later prophets denounce animal sacrifice. For example, Psalm 50 states: "I will not accept a bull from your house, or goats from your folds. For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in this field is mine" (9–11). Other passages explicitly teach that we must *live* for God (rather than kill for God): "When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:15–17). Hosea and Micah concur:

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
The knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hos. 6:6)
"With what shall I come before the LORD,
And bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
With ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justice, and to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6–8)

The moral direction of these passages is clear. Those who assume that God is pleased with the offering of a dead anymal ignore much that is of critical importance in scriptures, including such core teachings as Genesis 1, those of the Peaceable Kingdom, and the words of the *later* prophets who poke strongly against blood sacrifice.

6 Multiculturalism, Ethics, and Kaporos

In a multicultural society, when forced to choose between the protection and preservation of a religious tradition and the lives and welfare of anymals, what is the best course of action? To answer this question, ethics are vital—ethics both inside and outside of the Jewish tradition.

Multiculturalism—promoting and sharing multiple cultural traditions—would seem to push us toward the protection of religious traditions, but preserving cultures must not come at the expense of ethics—including traditional religious ethics. It is abundantly clear that those defending Kaporos have no moral ground on which to stand *within* the Jewish tradition. Jewish ethics contained in the Torah and Tanakh, restated by rabbis across time and around the world, speak against cruelty and for mercy and compassion. Torah teaches that God created and cares for and about all living beings, and that humanity was created to protect and serve creation. Furthermore, God created a vegan world, a peaceful world free of bloodshed, and we are to work to reestablish perfect peace in this world. Not much justification for Kaporos in this core lineup of Jewish ethics.

Multiculturalism seeks to share and honor cultural traditions, but some cultural traditions are cruel—they cause or are conducive to injury, grief, and pain. Critically, not one moral theory, not even one of the world's dominant religious traditions, encourages

cruelty.⁸⁹ This necessarily places multiculturalists, determined to defend and protect cultural traditions, in a quandary: When traditions conflict with ethics (including religious ethics), is it preferable to protect a religious ritual at the expense of key moral teachings, or to protect core moral principles at the expense of the ritual?

The quandary is answered by voices within the Jewish tradition engaged with this dilemma. Various rabbis have denounced Kaporos as pagan, as cruel, as hypocritical. Orthodox Rabbi Yanklowitz chides those who defend Kaporos.

The primary purpose of the Yamim Noraim (High Holidays) is to connect more deeply with God and to improve ourselves. Taking on a cruel practice and harming an innocent creature have no place in Jewish life. *Ta'ar ba'delei chaim* (the prohibition of harming animals) is a Torah prohibition that requires that we cultivate virtue and that we prevent suffering.⁹⁰

He adds, Kaporos observers “should be cultivating mercy for all those who suffer and not... perpetuating pain on sentient creatures in the name of piety.”⁹¹ Succinctly and directly, Meir Hirsch rabbi at the Neturei Karta ultra-Orthodox sect in Jerusalem, commented, “You cannot perform a commandment by committing a sin.”⁹²

Making the case against Kaporos yet stronger, “replacing chickens with donations to charity is a rising trend in Israel and around the world.”⁹³ Former Israeli Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren notes that “*Kapparat* is not consistent with Jewish teachings and law. Repentance and charity can be better accomplished by using money instead of a slaughtered

⁸⁹ Lisa Kemmerer, *Animals and World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 282.

⁹⁰ Shmuly Yanklowitz, “A Yom Kippur of Mercy or Cruelty? Bringing an End to Kaporos!” *The Jewish Week*, October 2, 2014a. http://www.thejewishweek.com/features/street_torah/yom_kippur_mercy_or_cruelty (Accessed 29/08/2015).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Katherine Bindley, “Rabbi Calls for Better Treatment of Kaporos Chickens in Yom Kippur Ritual,” *The Huffington Post*, September 3, 2013. (Accessed 29/08/2015). http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/03/treatment-of-kaporos-chickens_n_3861861.html (Accessed).

⁹³ “Israel’s ultra-Orthodox Rethink Yom Kippur Animal Sacrifice,” *Jewish World Association Press*, October 7, 2011 <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/israel-s-ultra-orthodox-rethink-yom-kippur-animal-sacrifice-1.388636> (Accessed 29/08/2015).

chicken.”⁹⁴ Rabbi Shlomo Segal of Brooklyn comments that the “pain caused to the chickens in the process of performing Kapparot is absolutely unnecessary. Giving money is a more humane method.”⁹⁵ Jerusalem Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals adds, “*It is absurd that people are asking for life by taking the life of another creature, especially when Kapparot can be done with money.*”⁹⁶ Put simply by Rachmiel Klein, who responded to the “The Kaporot Ceremony” Web site: “Why do people use chickens if money is completely acceptable and can be less expensive?” This is yet more surprising given that this ritual is unnecessary to Jewish practice, given the cruel nature of this ritual, and given how strongly Jewish ethics speak against cruelty.

As it turns out, Jewish ethics align with secular ethics on the topic of compassion and suffering. Morally speaking, suffering is always relevant and always to be avoided, as noted by well-known anymal ethicist, Peter Singer: “there can be no moral justification for refusing to take . . . suffering into consideration.”⁹⁷ People do not generally wish to cause anymals to endure prolonged suffering, and few would be indifferent to the footage of Kaporos showing the slitting of throats and the flapping of dying birds, tossed unceremoniously into a bin to die. There is a reason for this—compassion is a universal ethic because communities cannot survive if they do not care for one another. Core ethics teach us not to lie, steal, or murder because such behaviors prevent people from living safely in close proximity.⁹⁸ Consequently, cruelty is immoral in every community, while wanton cruelty of the powerful over the weak is yet the more deplorable. Consequently, basic universal human ethics speak against Kaporos.

Cruelty to anymals also runs contrary to fundamental rights. Another well-known philosopher on the topic of anymal ethics, Tom Regan,

detected that there was no rational explanation as to why only humans hold basic protections such as those against enslavement and murder. Regan reasoned that humans are granted these protections because of the types of beings that we are—because what happens to us matters to us, because we fare better or worse depending on what happens to us, and we prefer to fare better rather than worse—don’t all creatures? Consistency is central to ethics, and Regan noted that anymals also care what happens to them and, similarly, fare better or worse depending on what happens to them.⁹⁹ If we are to be consistent—as ethics requires—then all sentient, aware beings must be protected with basic rights. The protection of basic individual rights does not permit Kaporos.

In their quest to defend cultural traditions, those fighting to protect multiculturalism must not disregard basic, universal ethics. Multiculturalism should never defend practices that are cruel or bloody such as female circumcision, child slavery, burning of brides, or Kaporos. Instead, we must speak against Kaporos to end cruel and bloody rituals.

It is important to note that the ritual only needs to be altered. The Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos, consisting of both Jews and non-Jews, encourages “the use of money or other non-animal symbols of atonement”.¹⁰⁰ The Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos clearly states:

- The use of chickens for Kaporos is cruel.
- The use of chickens for Kaporos is not required by Jewish law.
- The use of chickens for Kaporos can be replaced by waving coins or other inanimate tokens of atonement.¹⁰¹

The Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos aligns with basic, universal ethics, yet the Alliance “does not oppose Kaporos”.¹⁰² The Alliance

⁹⁴ Davis quoting Mahgerefteh from “Jewish chicken killing ritual of Kapparot,” September 28, 2006.

⁹⁵ Davis (2013).

⁹⁶ Davis quoting Chedra Vanderbrook, ynetnews.com, Sept. 28, 2006.

⁹⁷ Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal,” *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*. Tom Regan and Peter Singer (eds.), (Oxford University Press, 1989), 8.

⁹⁸ James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (NY: McGraw Hill, 2015), 25.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 135. See also Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*. (New York: Routledge, 1984), 119.

¹⁰⁰ Davis (2013).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

only seeks to end "the cruel and unnecessary use of chickens in the ceremony".¹⁰³ The Alliance notes:

...we would not limit our goal to trying to make chicken Kaporos "more humane." If you've ever attended the ritual and experienced its carnivalesque nightmare atmosphere, you understand why. Yes, you can (and should) try to get practitioners to stop holding the chickens suspended painfully and injuriously by their wings, which they do for hours just standing around chatting with each other even before "waving" their own bird over their heads. You can (and should) urge the rabbis to at least cover the birds with a tarp in the rain, and you can (and should) urge ASPCA inspectors to get out there, as I and others have done for years with token success. But without the unequivocal goal of ending an inherently cruel ritual which is specifically designed to make an animal suffer and die for a human being's sins, you're going to accomplish little or nothing, while conceding legitimacy to a practice that is not required by Jewish law and that flagrantly violates *tsaar badelei chaim*, the Jewish mandate to avoid needlessly hurting animals and to show them compassion.¹⁰⁴

It is best if force for change comes from the inside. Indeed, Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal (then Executive Vice President of The New York Board of Rabbis) agreed that Kaporos is cruel, but added that Hasidic Jews, insular by nature, are not likely to change in any case and are even less likely to change when prompted by outsiders. Karen Davis (of United Poultry Concerns) responds, while "ultra-Orthodox Judaism does not respect the opinions and authority of outsiders... this does not excuse us from opposing" a cruel practice.¹⁰⁵ She adds, "Historically, social justice activists have always been charged with being 'outsiders' who have no business interfering... but practices that are cruel and unjust are everyone's business".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

7 Conclusion

Multiculturalism defends cultural traditions, but multiculturalism should not defend traditions that conflict with core, universal ethics, especially ethics designed to protect the vulnerable. When forced to decide between the protection and preservation of religious traditions, on the one hand, and the lives and welfare of anyimals, on the other, multiculturalists ought to protect the lives and welfare of the vulnerable. With regard to Kaporos and other cultural traditions that run contrary to foundational ethical principles, causing suffering and/or destroying life, multiculturalists ought to advocate for alternative practices. Barring alternatives, multiculturalists ought to advocate against the continuation of cruel cultural traditions—traditions that harm and destroy the lives of the vulnerable.

It is not necessary that the force for change comes from the outside—the Jewish tradition is rich with teachings that speak against Kaporos. All that is necessary for Jews to abandon Kaporos is adherence to core Jewish ethics such as mercy and compassion, not to harm, striving for the Peaceable Kingdom, and choosing a vegan diet. Abandoning Kaporos merely requires consistency between core ethics and practice. Moreover, change that stems from the inside is always to be preferred. Such change can come quickly and quietly, without the strain of conflict and confrontation across communities. But where acute suffering and numerous premature deaths are concerned, one cannot wait in the wings, so to speak, to see when those within the Jewish tradition will be prepared to commit to their own core ethics and stop slaughtering multitudes of suffering chickens. Furthermore, if there were a religious tradition that failed to teach compassion and caretaking of the vulnerable, multiculturalists ought to support core, universal, secular ethical teachings that denounce the harming of other beings against traditions that are cruel and disrespectful toward the lives of the vulnerable.

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